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SUBJECT: TURKS TO U/S HUGHES: DEEPER DIALOGUE WELCOME

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

Summary

1. (C) U/S Hughes met September 28 with Turkish FonMin Gul and MFA U/S Tuygan. Gul stressed Turkey's desire for stability on its borders, its concerns over developments in Iraq, and the need to maintain dialogue with Syria and Iran in order to change their behavior. On the PKK and terrorism, Gul said we needed concrete steps on the ground that would be crucial in restoring Turkish public support for the U.S. Gul noted Turkish frustration with the EU over Cyprus and asked for U.S. help in ending the isolation of Northern Cyprus. In a separate meeting, U/S Tuygan emphasized the Turkish public's broad sense of "humiliation" over the EU accession process. He called for a "deepened and structured dialogue," emphasized our common goals in the region, and hoped the U.S. would share with Turkey its long-term game plan for Iraq. U/S Hughes noted her trip to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey was her first official visit in her new capacity and hoped that her presence, and the visit of APNSA Hadley a few days before, would be seen as a sign of strong U.S. support for Turkey in this difficult time. Her approach to public diplomacy will emphasize "policies and people." She undertook to see where U.S. - Turkey exchange programs could be further expanded. She expressed appreciation for the frustrations being experienced by the Turkish people and undertook to convey these to the highest levels of the USG. The "strategic dialogue" would indeed be a genuine one, she promised. End Summary

FM Gul -- Small US Gesture Can Change Popular Attitudes

2. (C) U/S Hughes, accompanied by D/US Powell, EUR AS Bryza and the Charge, had separate meetings September 28 with Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul and MFA U/S Ali Tuygan. Gul assured Hughes the GOT considers relations with the U.S. the "main pillar" of its foreign policy; the relationship is based on shared values of democracy, free markets and freedom of expression. Turkey is surrounded, he continued, by various non-democratic regimes which do not enjoy the support of their people. Turkey maintains trade and other relations with those states, not because it approves of them, but to ensure stability on Turkey's borders. Addressing each state in turn, Gul began with Iraq. The situation in Iraq is of direct concern and there are growing popular fears of the effect of a divided Iraq on Turkey. Moving on to Iran, Gul noted that the Turkey-Iran border had been stable since 1639; the GOT does not want instability there. With Syria, the Turks have had bad experiences with Syrian support to PKK leader Ocalan as well as Syrian territorial claims. Turkey has no sympathy for the Baathist regime in Syria, but at the same time does not want instability there. U.S. policies that appear to threaten stability on Turkey's borders have created negative attitudes among the Turkish populace.

3. (C) Hughes replied that the U.S. and international community, as well as Syria's neighbors, need to be tough on Syria and Iran to get them to change their behaviors. Gul reiterated that the GOT has no sympathy for the regimes there but at the same time cannot afford chaos on its borders. Turkey is trying to influence those states; 800,000 Iranian tourists, and many Syrians, have visited Antalya and experienced freedom in Turkey. This is the best way to "threaten" those regimes. Gul elaborated that Turkey is using its contacts to show Damascus the "right way." Turkish and U.S. goals are the same, he said. He assured Hughes the GOT has warned the Syrians in blunt terms about their behavior and has no intention of letting Syria "relax."

4. (C) Gul emphasized that the "ground is ready" in Turkey and even a small gesture or modest action by the U.S. to reassure Turkey of its support could change popular attitudes for the better "in an instant." Expanding, Gul said the PKK threat in the southeast is getting dangerous again, and northern Iraq is a safe haven for Kurdish extremists. Common people are asking "why can't the U.S., the world's only superpower, stop this?" According to Turkish intelligence, the PKK feels "relaxed" and is able to move freely in

northern Iraq. The PKK garners support from Kurdish leaders there; those same Kurdish leaders will be the PKK's next targets Gul opined, referring specifically to the "Barzani tribe." Gul stressed the PKK must realize that there will be a cost to its terrorist activities and a U.S. warning to that effect would be useful. Gul encouraged the following actions: arresting PKK leaders in northern Iraq, cutting off logistics support, closing front organizations and shutting down refugee camps, like Makhmour, dominated by the PKK. DAS Bryza noted these must be done by the Iraqis themselves, with U.S. backing.

15. (C) Turning to Cyprus, Gul said the Turks and Turkish Cypriots feel cheated by the EU. The Turkish side compromised and got little for it. Gul recalled how President Bush asked Turkey to "show leadership" and to compromise on the Cyprus issue. "We did so, and the other side was rewarded," he complained. The U.S. can help the Greek Cypriot side understand that the support of its EU fellows is not always enough, while the U.S. can also help the Turkish side end its isolation. Direct flights from northern Cyprus would be key to this process, Gul stressed, and would encourage the Greek Cypriots to compromise.

16. (C) On the positive side of the ledger, Gul reviewed Turkey's contribution to ISAF in Afghanistan over the past two years. Overall transatlantic relations remain good, Gul said, and noted jokingly that his speeches at NATO sound just like the Secretary's. These relations enjoy the support of the Turkish people.

17. (C) Hughes noted that her visits to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey were part of her first overseas trip and were focused on listening. She expressed her appreciation for Gul's views and particularly valued the view of the Turkish "man in the street." Gul stressed the need for "empathy" for Turkish popular perceptions. Speaking of the Middle East in broad terms, Gul said there is a hunger for justice; people in the region are frustrated and need to believe the U.S. is committed to justice.

MFA U/S Tuygan -- Turkey's "Humiliation" Must be Alleviated  
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18. (C) In a separate call on MFA U/S Ali Tuygan, Hughes complimented Turkey's inspiring economic performance over the past four years. Turkey's rapid rebuilding after the devastating 1999 earthquakes were a good example to the U.S. after hurricane Katrina. Hughes thanked the GOT on behalf of the American people for the generous outpouring of aid, both official and from private citizens, for Katrina's victims. For his part, Tuygan lauded the "solid partnership" between the U.S. and Turkey and stated the GOT's readiness to move forward constructively. He called for a "deepened and structured dialogue" between the U.S. and Turkey to improve each's understanding of the other. The response to Katrina was a "genuine" response from the Turkish people, he said, coming from a country that finds itself at the meeting point of diverse civilizations and cultures.

19. (C) Hughes noted that, during his recent visit, APNSA Hadley had reinforced our desire to work with the GOT more closely on fighting PKK terrorism. Tuygan observed that a deeper and structured dialogue on the PKK and other issues is necessary, especially with growing disappointment and uneasiness in Turkey as the October 3 date for EU accession negotiations approaches. "There is much uncertainty in the air." On Iraq, Tuygan stressed the need to leave the past behind and focus on the future. However, he noted, prospects are uncertain and this is creating difficulties for Turkey. Turkey is trying to work with all parties in Iraq towards the same goal as the U.S. -- a unified, democratic, and federal Iraq -- but the realities on the ground are not reassuring. Turkey needs to understand the U.S. view of the "end game" in Iraq. The possibility that Iraq might be dismembered is critical for Turkey.

110. (C) Turning to the EU, Tuygan expressed appreciation for U.S. support for Turkey's accession but strongly emphasized Turkey's disappointment with the way the EU is handling the pre-October 3 process. The Turkish public is becoming pessimistic as the EU is seen imposing more conditions on Turkey. "We try to reassure the public, but this is not sustainable." Tuygan said Turkey was feeling "humiliation," a particularly bitter feeling here. The U.S. asks for Turkey's support but Ankara does not feel it is being clued in to ultimate U.S. plan for Iraq, the "end game." "Let's get October 3 behind us; it won't be much of a celebration in any case," Tuygan stated. Then Turkey will focus on deepening and broadening the U.S. - Turkey dialogue.

111. (C) U/S Hughes responded she hoped her visit and that of APNSA Hadley had signaled strong U.S. support for Turkey at this difficult time. She described her view of public diplomacy as about policies and their effects on people, not "spin." She will participate in policymaking and promised

our dialogue with Turkey would be "real" and in a spirit of true partnership. Tuygan appreciated this commitment and, referring to the PKK and terrorism, said Turkey had not forgotten past U.S. support in the fight against terror. Whatever the U.S. can do in this regard, he said, will be greatly appreciated by the Turkish public.

¶12. (C) Elaborating on U.S. - Turkey exchange programs, U/S Hughes and DU/S Powell stressed the importance of people-to-people contacts and their intention to expand these for Turkey. Turkey is currently the number one recipient of Fulbright grants. The U.S. would also like to expand the International Visitors Program (IVP) between Turkey and the U.S. and ensure that it includes journalists, religious leaders, and entrepreneurs to allow the greatest reach into the private sector. Hughes said the U.S. has made much progress alleviating the post 9/11 difficulties that many exchange visitors experienced getting to the U.S. Noting that he was a high school exchange student in the U.S., Tuygan stressed the importance of including business leaders in exchanges. He noted proudly that Turkey is in eighth place on U.S. campuses with 11,000 university and nearly 10,000 secondary and high school exchange students in the U.S. Charge McElDowney and Hughes stressed the need for Turkish journalists to better understand the U.S. as well. Tuygan agreed, noting at the same time that the non-Turkish press has a huge impact in Turkey. He referred to recent U.S. articles that, he claimed, distorted Turkish reality. Hughes noted the broad assortment of print and TV journalists that were accompanying her on her trips.

¶13. (C) Returning to the "humiliation" point he had made earlier, Tuygan described it as an overall sense in the country, not based on any single issue. Tuygan stressed that "nationalism" is not on the rise, but "frustration" is. No violent outburst is expected, but it must be watched. DAS Bryza expressed his appreciation for Tuygan's candor and choice of words, and re-stated APNSA Hadley's commitment to the strategic dialogue, finding a common frame of reference, and proceeding together in a transparent fashion.  
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